



The Center on  
Conscience & War

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## "We are All Conscientious Objectors"



Joshua Casteel,  
J.E. McNeil,  
Chris Hedges



Former Boardmembers Titus Peachy, David Miller with J.E. McNeil and Bill Galvin at  
Riverside Church, New York during the *Truth Commission on Conscience*



Bill Galvin & Camilo Mejia



Jake Diliberto



Rick Ufford-Chase,  
Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

### Truth Commission on Conscience

by Bill Galvin

On March 21st and 22nd approximately 80 commissioners gathered at the historic Riverside Church in New York City for a Truth Commission on Conscience in War. CCW had a prominent role in the Commission: J.E. McNeil was among the testifiers. Bill Galvin and Daniel Lakemacher were commissioners, as were three former CCW board members.

On the evening of the 21st, J.E. McNeil gave a passionate speech in the same place that Dr. Martin Luther King made his famous "Beyond Vietnam" speech crying out for peace in 1967. J. E. McNeil's talk brought the gathering a new concept: "We are all conscientious objectors." By highlighting the common ground between the traditionally opposing views of those who believe in "Just War" and those who oppose all war,

J.E. McNeil chose a striking manner in which to emphasize how critically important it is to expand the concept of conscientious objection beyond the narrow scope currently recognized by the United States government. Having outlined a history of the recognition of the role of conscience in war, she went on to explain how advocacy on this vast and significant issue cannot rightly be seen as the sole responsibility of any one group, whether that group has been historically recognized as a "peace church" or not. At a conference that included attendees of vastly different religious and political perspectives, J.E. McNeil offered a unifying message that everyone present must take up the mantle of ensuring that the rights of conscientious objectors are protected whether they stand opposed to a specific war or war in any form.

*continued on page four*

### Also Inside:

News Briefs.....	Page 2
CCW News.....	Page 3
• New Development Director	
• Selective Service System	
• Meeting in Goshen, IN	
Truth Comission on Conscience.....	Page 4
CO Memories.....	Page 6
WWI Munition.....	Page 6



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*Founded in 1940, the Center on Conscience & War works to extend and defend the rights of conscientious objectors to war. In pursuit of this calling, the Center provides these services free of charge:*

- Counsel military conscientious objectors.
- Provide legal support for military personnel.
- Lobby Congress to extend and defend the rights of conscientious objectors.
- Provide accurate information to the public on Selective Service registration.
- Provide support to COs who refuse to register for the draft through F.E.A.T student loans.
- Counsel soldiers on the GI Rights Hotline with accuracy and honesty.
- Military counter-recruitment information
- Provide workshops, training, and speakers on any of the above topics.

# News Briefs

## Greece: Suspended Sentences for Conscientious Objectors

Giorgos Monastiriotis, a professional soldier who refused to participate in the Iraq war for ideological reasons of conscience, was again on trial on February 18th before the Appeal Military Court of Athens for the third desertion charge. He was sentenced to five months imprisonment, but the sentence was suspended for three years. Giorgos Monastiriotis refused to deploy to the Persian Gulf in May 2003, in protest against the support of Greece to "Operation Enduring Freedom" -- a contribution to the war against Iraq.

On the next day the trial of Evangelos Mihalopoulos, another conscientious objector on ideological grounds, on February 19th before the Military Court of Athens on charges of insubordination ended with a sentence of eight months imprisonment suspended for three years. Mihalopoulos' supporters maintain that his prosecution violates his right to conscientious objection since the civilian service which he is called to perform is discriminatory and punitive in nature and length. It's under the authority of the Ministry of Defense and it lasts 17 months, while the military service lasts 9 months.

<http://wri-irg.org/>

## Canada: Federal Court will not Intervene for U.S. War Resister

Mennonite Central Committee Canada (MCCC) and Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) (Quakers) express disappointment that the Canadian Federal Court of Appeal has rejected a request to intervene in an appeal by U.S. war resister Jeremy Hinzman. Hinzman and his family applied for permanent resident status in Canada on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, but their application was rejected.

[www.newswire.ca](http://www.newswire.ca)

## Europe: End of Compulsory Military Service in Sight

Serbia's Minister of Defence Dragan Sutanovac has announced that compulsory military service will be suspended and the professionalization of the Serbian Army be completed next year. In an interview with the daily Blic, Sutanovac expressed his belief that the country's president Boris Tadic will be in a position to suspend compulsory military service based on a report given by the defence ministry. "I can promise that my team and I shall do everything to finalise that process by the end of the year,"

[www.balkaninsight.com](http://www.balkaninsight.com)

The first of July this year Sweden will phase out the system of general conscription. Instead, the sub-officers, soldiers and sailors will be employed in war units.

[stockholmnews.com](http://stockholmnews.com)

When Sweden ends its general conscription 23 of 27 European Union Nations without conscription. Within NATO 23 of 28 states don't have conscripted service anymore.

For nations who wish to join either NATO or EU, ending conscription may be a requirement for membership in the future.

## Shop with GoodShop & Support CCW!

Up to 30% of a purchase you might have made anyway can go towards the Center. Just log on to [www.goodsearch.com/goodshop.aspx](http://www.goodsearch.com/goodshop.aspx), and search for your favorite online store. Just make sure you select "**Center on Conscience & War**" as your charity of choice, and proceeds from your purchase will go towards our efforts at defending the rights of conscientious objectors...at no extra charge to you!

## Daniel Lakemacher Becomes CCW's Development Director



Daniel Lakemacher

In the last issue of The Reporter, I wrote about how I became a conscientious objector and counselee of CCW. With the Center's guidance, I was honorably discharged from the Navy in September 2009, but even during the multi-month process of applying for CO status, I was eager to be doing what I could to increase awareness about conscientious objection.

Shortly after my release from the Navy, my wife took a job in Washington, D.C., and suddenly the idea of working fulltime to help other COs became a realistic possibility. With this in mind, I found myself again sitting in J.E. McNeil's office, but this time

without any looming worries about the status of my own CO application. Having already volunteered at CCW when on military leave, I figured that I knew some of the administrative and computer-related areas in which I could help. Much to my surprise, J.E. had an even larger vision for my role at the Center, and she encouraged me to consider accepting a position as CCW's new Director of Development. Given how well such a position fits with my passion for talking to people about CO concerns and, in particular, emphasizing the importance the Center had in my discharge, I am even more excited about the possibilities of this job.

With this responsibility, I look forward to personally meeting and thanking so many of you whose generous giving provided both the support and expert advice I needed as a military member seeking a CO discharge.

## Selective Service System Conference Updates Churches on CO Matters

by Bill Galvin

On March 25th, Selective Service hosted their first internet/phone conference of the year to update churches and CO groups about Selective Service news. As always they emphasized that THERE IS NO current plan to draft anyone. Their current budget is \$24 million which is about the lowest it's been (in today's dollars) since registration began in 1980.

The conference provided an opportunity to talk with the new Director of Selective Service, Lawrence G. Romo. He expressed an appreciation of the history of faith groups moving to the US seeking religious freedom, and how that had impacted or nation's tradition of respect for civil liberties. And he expressed a specific

respect for the fact that many of those groups were religious pacifists, seeking to be free from conscription and wars.

Richard Flahavan, Associate Director for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, reviewed draft-related activity on Capitol Hill. (Nothing's happening.) Selective Service also talked about new developments in their plans for placing conscientious objectors into alternative service.

## CCW meets with supporters in Goshen, IN

by Patrick Spahn

Faithful supporters of CCW met with me to talk about the Center's work and to watch the film "Soldiers of Conscience" at Goshen College in Indiana. The event was planned spontaneously when I went to Goshen because of family reasons.

Supporters of the Center were contacted and invited literally the day before the event took place. Many former Civilian Public Servants, who have faithfully supported the Center for decades, attended the event. During the first part of the event, I talked about the work of the GI Rights Hotline, the changes regarding Conscientious Objector law since World War II as well as our current project to prepare the manual on conscientious objection for military chaplains. Then we watched the movie "Soldiers of Conscience".

I thank everyone who attended on such a short notice. It was a great pleasure for me to meet WWII Conscientious Objectors.

The Center on Conscience & War is always looking for ways to inform you about our current work. If you would like to invite us to your church or local advocacy group, feel free to contact us.

## J.E. McNeil quoted in Washington Post

by Patrick Spahn

Ken Sehested of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America wrote an article about the Truth Commission on Conscience in the faith section of [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com).

J.E. McNeil, a lawyer and director of the Center on Conscience & War, reminded the commissions and public hearing guests that "we are all conscientious objectors." Which is to say, the just-war theory implies that some wars are immoral, and every individual's political right to undertake moral assessment. Yet there is no legal provision to ensure that right for military personnel.

[www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

# “Extending the rights of conscience...”

(continued from frontpage)

## Truth Comission on Conscience in War

by Bill Galvin

Prior to the gathering, many papers had been circulated including a research paper by Jennifer Whitten and Miriam Marton titled Conscientious Objection and the Laws of Warfare:

*War is governed by international and domestic law. International war law is contained in agreements such as the Nuremberg Principles, the Geneva Conventions, the Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court and “customary international law,” those laws that have developed out of customs and practices among nations. Domestic war law is a nation’s own laws and military regulations. All of the above bind governments and individual soldiers. Logically, then, these laws and regulations should support the soldier’s refusal to serve a specific war on the grounds of conscience. In the United States, however, to obtain conscientious objector status, a soldier must prove that h/she is opposed to “war in any form.” This is problematic for soldiers who come to view specific wars or military conduct as illegal. The situation is further exacerbated because a soldier may be prosecuted both for refusing to follow superior commands and for following legally questionable orders.*

These papers helped set the stage for powerful testimony from military COs at a public hearing with approximately 500 people in attendance. Some of the testimony was in the form of excerpts from the movie “Soldiers of Conscience.” Celeste Zappala, one of the founders of Gold Star Families Speak Out, spoke of her

son’s death in Iraq and the impact it had on her family and community. Tyler Boudreau, a former Marine Captain and Iraq war veteran, observed that many combatants have to believe, “the

action they were part of must have been justified, or else there’s something wrong with what I did, and that’s too hard to bear.” And the ever engaging Josh Casteel, Army CO and former Abu Ghraib interrogator, observed, “There is no such thing as a private conscience. Conscience is inherently public and political.”

The powerful and passionate testimony of these people who were personally affected by war was followed by Herman Keizer, a retired Army chaplain who recounted the struggles of some of “his” soldiers during Vietnam, who were raised with a “just war” ethic and came to believe what they were doing in Vietnam was wrong. Even though they conscientiously objected to what they were doing, and they were sincere, they didn’t have any legal recourse under U.S. conscientious objector law because they could not honestly say that they objected to “war in any form.” He thus laid out his vision for a change in governmental policy to allow for selective conscientious objection.

Keizer’s testimony was followed by testimony from Jewish, Muslim and Christian traditions describing how each of their traditions view war. After having these three major faith-based perspectives represented, the Center’s J.E. McNeil gave her speech that included what became an oft-referenced line of the Commission, “We are all conscientious objectors.” This bold statement was made to highlight the fact that if there is a “Just War Theory,” it necessarily follows that unjust wars must also exist. Therefore, even a “Just War” adherent would be a conscientious objector to some wars.

To round out the evening, testimony continued from Camillo Bica (a philosophy professor and Vietnam veteran) and Chris Hedges, a former war correspondent for the New York Times and author of “War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning.”



J.E. Mc Neil speaking at Riverside Church:  
“We are All Conscientious Objectors”

# “Extending the rights of conscience...”

(continued from page four)

The next day the commissioners returned to Riverside Church to wrestle with the information that had challenged listeners the day before. The gathering included representatives from a number of religious bodies who are well placed for influencing their tradition. Also included were many academics, with a heavy emphasis on those teaching in seminaries or divinity schools. Besides the Center, groups like Iraq Veterans Against the War and Military Families Speak Out were well represented, as were a number of religious peace fellowships.



Daniel Lakemacher, Jake Diliberto, Joshua Casteel, Logan Mehl-Laituri, Elyse Gustapson



CCW Staff used the opportunity to meet with filmmakers of the award winning film “Soldiers of Conscience”  
Ian Slattery, J.E. McNeil, Gary Weimberg, Daniel Lakemacher, Bill Galvin & Cathryn Ryan

This second day was spent primarily in smaller groups allowing for personal interaction. J. E. followed her passionate speech from the night before, with a detailed analysis of the importance of the Military Conscientious Objector Act (MCOA). Later the groups reformed around common interests. One large group that was interested in working on a legislative solution to the problems encountered by selective conscientious objectors (those who object to a particular war) was led by J.E. McNeil and centered on the Military Conscientious Objector Act (MCOA) for which CCW has long been lobbying. This proposed legislation would allow selective conscientious objection. This has been of particular concern for the Center because COs in the military usually begin by objecting to the war or situation they are facing. Often they have never thought about whether they object to all war. That may come later, but they know this immediate thing is wrong. Bill Galvin led a group on training counselors, while Daniel Lakemacher participated in the media group.

It is too early to know the long term effects of this Commission, but there appeared to be quite a bit of momentum for follow up action as the gathering drew to a close. A Truth Commission report is scheduled to be released on Veteran’s Day November 11th, 2010.

The Center will continue to work on these issues regardless of the long term effects of this Commission, but we are encouraged and energized by the prospect of new partners and renewed interest from some of our longer term partners.

A n o t h e r group was interested in helping with more direct assistance for COs in the military. Another focused on helping veterans and families to heal from the trauma. There was also a group interested in reaching out to the media.

## CCW shows

**Soldiers of Conscience**  
on May 15th  
International CO Day  
in Washington DC

for more information visit:  
[www.centeronconscience.org](http://www.centeronconscience.org)

# “Spreading the word...”

## A World War II CO recalls Civilian Public Service

By Rev. Henry E. Gable

Soon after graduating from high school in York, Pennsylvania, I received notice to travel to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania for a physical examination. There were two of us labeled “conscientious objector” in RED letters. Obviously, we passed the examination.

Shortly thereafter, I received notice to report to the Civilian Public Service Camp #4 in Grottoes, VA, to do work of national importance. My ride from the dirty (coal burning) train to the camp in a pickup truck was intriguing. I felt like a youngster in the camp of older men who had been drafted earlier on. I was a Mennonite Church member but because our family lived in the city, I was different in the midst of mostly farmers.

My first job was as a member of a work crew that went out to cut down small cedar trees in a huge hill field. I recall standing on the top with Winslow Ames, a Quaker, by my side and hearing him say, “Henry, just look at that valley of humiliation!”

Soon I was appointed to be the ‘property clerk’ in the government technical office along with John Wolgemuth, who was in charge of the office under the government employee. It was at my desk that the workers signed out trucks, bulldozers, and tools for the work projects. In that position I learned from John how to spread butter on crackers with a scissors blade! We have often laughed about that!

An old Plymouth pickup truck was assigned to me to transport sick campers to the physician’s office. I remember the license number: A5856. One day the person in the fire tower on the mountain several miles away telephoned for us to go out and check on some smoke that was visible from the tower. John sent me. When I arrived at the scene I made a mental note of the situation and on the way back to the office I got lost....obviously, I wasn’t able to inform them of the location of the fire. I was totally embarrassed!

Later on I was transferred to the National Service Board for Religious Objectors in Washington, D.C. Paul French and Joe Weaver were executive directors at different times. I was to be somewhat of a general assistant to the staff. My first job turned out to be a search for a dead rat somewhere in the cellar wall and dispose of it! Unfortunately, I could not find it and we had to put up with the odor for a few days!

One daily duty was to travel to the Post Office by trolley car and bring back the mail every day. Usually there was a large bag full. One time a police officer followed me the whole way back to the office, followed me into the office, and checked over the mail. Seeing that all were addressed to the office he politely said, OK, and walked back out to the sidewalk.

There was no way for me to do my laundry so I mailed my soiled clothes to my parents in a mailing box and then mother would clean and press them and return them in the same box. I am forever indebted to her for her unfailing labor.

From a religious point of view I regarded all of my work in C.P.S. as ordained of God and I believe that this experience was a ‘stepping stone’ which guided me to the Christian Ministry. After I was discharged from C.P.S. and received educational preparation I was ordained into the Christian Ministry of the Evangelical United Brethren Church. (At that time Lancaster Conference Mennonite ministers were chosen by ‘lot,’ like my father, Walter H. Gable.) The EUB church united with the Methodist Church and the two became The United Methodist Church in 1968. After serving for 32 years in the pastoral ministry I retired, but am still serving part time as a pastor. My CPS experience was outstanding in my judgment and was instrumental in my lifetime profession as a pastor.

Remember our annual  
**Advisory Council meeting**  
**May 15th**  
**International CO Day**

for more details:  
[www.centeronconscience.org](http://www.centeronconscience.org)

## On Combat

Book review by Patrick Spahn

“On Combat”, by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman with input from Loren W. Christensen, is about the psychology and physiology of combat. Christensen is a Vietnam veteran and a retired police officer from Portland, who specialized in self-defense and police officer survival. Grossman is a former Army Ranger and currently director of the “Killology” Research Group.

“The goal of the book is to seek out hidden facts and intimate things, so we can send warriors into battle who are forewarned and forearmed,” the authors state.

Grossman talks about the Universal Human Phobia -- what people feel when they are in danger, such as combat or a situation in which they might be attacked or killed. It is universal in that type of situation. It is rarely felt, however, since the per capita aggravated assault rate in the U.S. is four per 1,000 per year, and most of us are not assaulted. We do not live our life, every second of every day afraid that something is going to happen to us. For those of us who have faced attacks, however, the trauma may be severe and long-lasting.

*continued on page seven*

# “Spreading the word...”

(continued from page six)

“In World War I, World War II and Korea the number of soldiers who pulled out of the front lines because they were psychiatric casualties was greater than the number of those who died in combat. The stress of combat debilitates far more warriors than are killed in direct hostile action. Worst of all were those rare situations in which soldiers were trapped in continuous combat of 60 to 90 days. In those cases, 98 percent became psychiatric casualties.”

As a concrete example, Grossman recalls the battle of Stalingrad during World War II. The battle lasted for six months. Russian reports say that the Russian soldiers involved in this battle mostly died around the age of 40, while other Russian civilians born in the same generation lived until their 60s and 70s.

Grossman also writes about the physiology of combat. He refers to a study on the performance of U.S. troops in World War II, in which a quarter of soldiers reported having lost control of their bladders and 12.5 % lost control of their bowels. This study did not differentiate between the soldiers who were in combat and those who were not. Grossman estimates that 50 % of soldiers in combat lost bladder control and 25 % lost bowel control. This section of the book is called “The Harsh Reality of Combat: What You Don’t Hear at the *Veterans of Foreign Wars*.” Grossman explains:

“The reason you will not say that to your grandbaby, is because of an old axiom: All’s fair in love and war. Meaning that there are two things men will always lie about. It also means that everything you think you know about war is based on 5,000 years of lies. No, you will never tell your grandbaby about the degrading, demeaning, debasing, humiliating things that happened to you in combat. Instead you will fill him with popcorn and sunshine. The problem with this is that 20 years later, when he is in combat and has just messed his drawers, he will ask himself: ‘What is wrong with me? This didn’t happen to grandpa, and it didn’t happen to John Wayne!’

Grossman goes on: “The loss of bowel and bladder control is only the tip of the iceberg when we examine what really happens in combat.” Grossman writes about the importance of enough sleep before you are in a gun fight, the relationship between physiological arousal and performance, and the correlation between PTSD and lack of sleep: “Insufficient sleep and physical exhaustion is a key factor in predisposing you to be a stress casualty.”

Common effects during gun fights and combat include inadvertent selective hearing. Grossman recalls reports and stories of law

enforcement and soldiers who heard everything but their own guns discharging. They stopped shooting because they thought something was wrong with their weapons.

Tunnel vision is another common effect experienced by persons in combat. Grossman cites a study in which eight out of ten officers surveyed experienced tunnel vision during shooting. There have even been cases in which police officers imagined during a shooting that their partner got shot. When the shooting was over, the affected officers were stunned and confused to find their partners were fine. According to a study, this happens to 21 % of police officers involved in shootings.

The agenda of Grossman, a West Point psychology professor, is clearly to describe the hidden facts and unknown intimate happenings of war so that warriors are forewarned and forearmed. His book proves that war is inhuman in many ways; it shows that the human body and psyche has limits, for good reason. War pushes humans over the edge; this makes it inhuman.

Grossman puts law enforcement and soldiers in the same category, because a lot of these untold facts happen to both, but when was a police officer ever in combat for 60 to 90 days? A police officer might be in a few gun fights in his or her career, and often these occur after years on the job, during which the person adjusted to what could happen. They have adjusted to the fact that they might have to shoot someone. Young soldiers in a war zone, however, face killing people who are not an actual threat to them, are quite something else.

Grossman refers to both as “warriors.” He does not differentiate between the War on Terror and the war on crime. He even writes, “Today the peacekeepers and the peace officers are moving toward each other.” He would actually like to use the term “peace warrior” to refer

to many professions, regardless of whether or not they use guns: including social workers, Red Cross workers, Green Berets, police, and firefighters.

The chapter on “true warriors” is too graphic to describe in “The Reporter.” “On Combat” can help people, both those who have been in a similar dramatic situation and want to understand what happened to them and those who want to be aware of the facts before they ever get into such a situation.

“On Combat” may also help wannabe soldiers if they read this book before they enlist and come to the conclusion that war is unjust and inhuman. What could be better for counter-recruitment, than a book by a Lieutenant Colonel?

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## ***From the Desk of the Executive Director***

We just came back from the “Truth Commission on Conscience in War.” The thrust of the Commission was to support the rights of conscience in the military, including for people who object only to some wars.

Selective objection is not a new idea for the Center. In 1965 in the middle of the Vietnam War, the Center concluded:

An important concept in our religious and moral heritage . . . distinguishes unjust from “just wars.” Today some religiously motivated persons invoke that doctrine. Though the present law does not speak to this point, it appears difficult from a moral or religious viewpoint to deny a conscience formed by this conviction the recognition now accorded to conventional conscientious objectors. . . . Proper recognition of conscientious objection to unjust wars, while obviously a complex matter, seems to require additional consideration by the President or the Congress or the courts.

Since that time, the Center has carried as part of its mission working for the extension of recognition of the right of conscience for those who object to a particular war – selective objectors.

In the 1990s, we worked with Congressman Ron Dellums who sat on the House Armed Services Committee to draft a bill that would have provided three very important revisions to the system of CO discharges from the military. First, that the right would be in law and not merely regulations and therefore not easily taken back. Second, that the process would be more uniform – both across the branches and in line with other discharges in the military. Third, that CO discharge would be available for selective COs.

Once Dellums left Congress, however, there was no one on the Hill with an interest in carrying these rights forward. Although, the Center never abandoned this bill, we rarely had the time (or likelihood of success) to make its passage a priority. After 9/11 and the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Center made a number of attempts to bring this issue before the Congress, but to no avail.

Nevertheless, the Center has worked, talked, and taught about the concept that those who are deemed conscientious objectors by the federal government make up a narrow part of the full spectrum of COs. Indeed, all people are conscientious objectors, because all people believe some war is wrong.

The Center has worked to gain recognition by the government of a broader spectrum of COs—one that includes objectors to paying taxes for war and those who object to only some wars. We maintain that the rights of all conscientious objectors to war should be respected.

To that end the Center continues to work for the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Bill and the Military Conscientious Objector Act. The Center writes amicus briefs so that nonreligious COs do not have a higher standard to meet than religious COs. The Center educates and speaks and works to defend and extend the rights of COs to all of those who need and deserve those rights.

Yours for Peace and Justice,

*J. E. McNeil*

J. E. McNeil

